

Courtesy Tom Hashem, KA1F

1912 The introduction of licensing. 5 wpm code required 1917 – Code requirement increased to 10 wpm.

1917 Cessation of activity due to WWI (lasts till 1919).

1922 Amateur Radio call signs will now be government assigned. Previously, hams made up their own call signs (often a person's initials). The Amateur Radio service is created with two classes of licenses, First Grade and Second Grade. First Grade required a written essay examination and a code test of 5 words per minute. The test was administrated before a "Radio Inspector" at a Commerce Department Field Office. The Second Grade license was for people who could not appear at a Commerce Dept. Field Office. An existing Amateur Radio First Grade licensee would administer the test.

1923 Amateur Extra First Grade license class added. Another new license class was created, the Amateur Extra First Grade. This license conveyed additional operating privileges, after passing a more difficult written examination and a code test of 20 words per minute.

1924 Spark gap transmitters banned on newly allocated 80, 40, 20, and 5 meter bands.

1926 Spark gap transmitters made illegal on the ham bands.

1927 The existing Amateur First Grade license is renamed the Amateur Class license. The Federal Radio Commission created.

1928 The Radio Commission starts testing for "Amateur First Grade" licenses.

1932 The Amateur Class license class is renamed the Amateur First Class license.

1934 Establishment of the FCC. License restructuring. Code requirement increased to 13 wpm. Accurate logging required. Mobile or portable operation required written notice to the FCC.

1939 FCC introduces multiple-choice tests.

1940 US amateurs prohibited from contacting other countries. All licensees required to supply fingerprints, photo, and proof of citizenship to FCC.

1941 80 m taken over by Army.

1942 Cessation of activity due to WWII (1942-1945).

1945 Amateur license terms are extended from 3 to 5 years.

1949 Citizen's Radio Service established (the 1 1-meter ham band is reassigned to models and Class D Citizens' Band radio in 1958).

1951 New license classes and names changed. FCC creates the Novice, Technician and Extra class licenses to join the Advanced (formerly class A), General (formally Class B) and Conditional (formerly class C) licenses. Licenses terms were now 5 years except Novice which was 1 year, non-renewable. Novices were limited to 75 watts input with crystal frequency control of CW on portions of the HF bands. Novices also had CW and Phone privileges in the 145-147 MHz segment of 2 meters. Ah Novice call signs were 2x3 with the second letter being an "N". The Novice test was a 20-question written and 5 wpm CW test originally administered by FCC examiners. Also, a person could only hold a Novice license one time. The Technician license as created had had amateur privileges from 220 MHz and up (No 6 or 2 meters). The intent was to get a bunch of people experimenting on the then new (their first use was during WWII) "UHF" frequencies.

1952 FCC stopped issuing new Advanced class licenses December— FCC stopped issuing new Advanced class licenses and took away unique Advanced and Extra privileges, everyone General and up had the same privileges (after changing license classes and rules 1 year earlier).

A History of Amateur Radio License Changes

Page 2 of 3

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1954 Novice license testing duty turned over to hams. Novice license testing was turned over to volunteer hams who would administer the code test, send paperwork to the FCC who would then return a written test which the volunteer would administer and then send to the FCC for final grading.

1955 Technician class licensees receive 6-meter privileges.

1959 Technician class licensees are given a portion of the 2-meter band (145-147 MHz).

1967 Incentive Licensing takes effect "Incentive Licensing" takes effect, returning the Advanced class license and taking privileges away from Generals, effectively stopping growth of Amateur Radio and causing a lot of bad feelings among the amateur community for the ARRL who originally proposed the program.

1972 Technician licenses are granted access to the complete 2-meter band. Novices are allowed to use radios with a VFO, and logging requirements are relaxed.

1974 FCC begins issuing "WR" prefix callsigns as part of new repeater regulations.

1975 The Novice and Technician licenses get major changes. Among the changes are an increase in power for Novices from 75 to 250 watts. Technicians are also given full Novice privileges on the HF bands.

1976 "WN" prefixes for Novice licenses were eliminated Effective July 1, 1976, any Extra class licensee who had been a licensed Amateur for 25 years or more could select one specific 1x2 call sign. Effective October 1, 1976, anyone who had held an Amateur Extra class license prior to November 22, 1967, could select one specific 1x2 call sign.

1977 FCC suspends all Amateur Radio license fees. Code sending test is waived. Effective January 1, 1977, anyone who had held an Amateur Extra class license prior to July 2, 1974, could select one specific 1x2 call sign. Effective April 1, 1977, anyone who held an Amateur Extra class license prior to July 1, 1976, could select one specific 1x2 call sign. Effective July 1, 1977, any Amateur Extra class licensee could select one specific 1x2 call sign.

1978 Call signs now assigned automatically in sequential order. As of March 24, the FCC will be assigning call signs automatically, in sequential order. This is the start of the "Group" call sign assignments. Also, the Novice license becomes a renewable license (following the example of all other license classes). The FCC stopped (February 23) the Extra-class only vanity call sign program due to internal mishandling and maybe some corruption. The ability of a person to hold multiple station licenses (having multiple callsigns), known as a secondary callsign, at different addresses is eliminated by the FCC. Instant upgrades (/AE) allowed. Moving to a new call district no longer required a change of callsign.

1982 VEC created President Regan signs into law a bill that allows the FCC to authorize licensed hams to create and administer amateur radio license tests.

1984 Amateur licenses go from a 5-year term to 10 years. Testing no longer required to take place at FCC field offices.

1987 Novice enhancement. Expansion of privileges for Novices; voice privileges; a chance to sample HF without a Morse key.

1988 Military and commercial use of Morse code ceases.

1991 No-code Tech license class created. FCC creates a new Technician license without a Morse code requirement. This was based on a proposal by QCWA.

1995 Vanity callsigns introduced.

A History of Amateur Radio License Changes

Page 3 of 3

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1999 Three license classes now. The FCC proposes major changes to amateur rules, cutting license classes from six down to three with a single 5 wpm code test for the two highest classes – General and Extra (new Novice and Advanced class licenses are eliminated).

2000 Highest code test is 5 WPM April 15 — Code speed for General and Extra license reduced to 5 wpm. No new Novice, Technician Plus or Advanced class licenses will be issued. Novice and Advanced class licenses can continue to be renewed. All Technician Plus licenses became converted to Technician (on the license), but retained their HF (equivalent to Novice) privileges. In a few years when all code tests were eliminated, ALL Technician Licensees have HF (Novice) privileges.

2005 No more code test FCC releases NPRM regarding the elimination of Morse Code tests for all licenses.

2006 December – Coming just before the end of the year (like the license restructuring of 1999/2000) FCC releases first a confusing press release and then a few days later the official Report and Order eliminating Morse Code testing requirements for all license classes. The FCC also opens the door for a possible reconsideration of some of the voice frequency allocations announced just 1 month previously.